

73

CERTAIN *CLYTIE* SPECIES IN EUROPE AND MALTA
REMARKS ON THE REPORTED OCCURRENCE OF
CERTAIN *CLYTIE* HUEBNER SPECIES IN
ENGLAND AND MALTA

By E. P. WILTSHIRE*

A record which has puzzled me since I read it is that of *Clytie illunaris* Hbn. found in June 1964 by D. S. Brown and H. Duddington on the banks of the R. Trent near Scunthorpe, Lincs., on horse-radish. J. Heath (1983:361) dignified this nice moth with a vernacular name: "The Trent Double-stripe", apt enough as an epithet except for its almost implying that those wishing to find it again might look for it in the same place. Its known northern limits in Europe are 700 miles to the south, on the lower course of the R. Rhone.

Recently Anthony Valletta (1984:46) mentioned the capture at an air-port hotel in Malta of *Clytie sancta* Stgr. adding "a suspected Middle East import", which was a reasonable explanation for a moth, described, as its name suggests, from the Holy Land and taken at an air-port. However, this moth's natural range in fact extends across the Saharan parts of Africa to the Atlantic: it occurs in Spain occasionally and a resident race has been described from the Canaries (Pinker, 1973: 7). It may therefore well have reached Malta by its own unaided powers, from Africa.

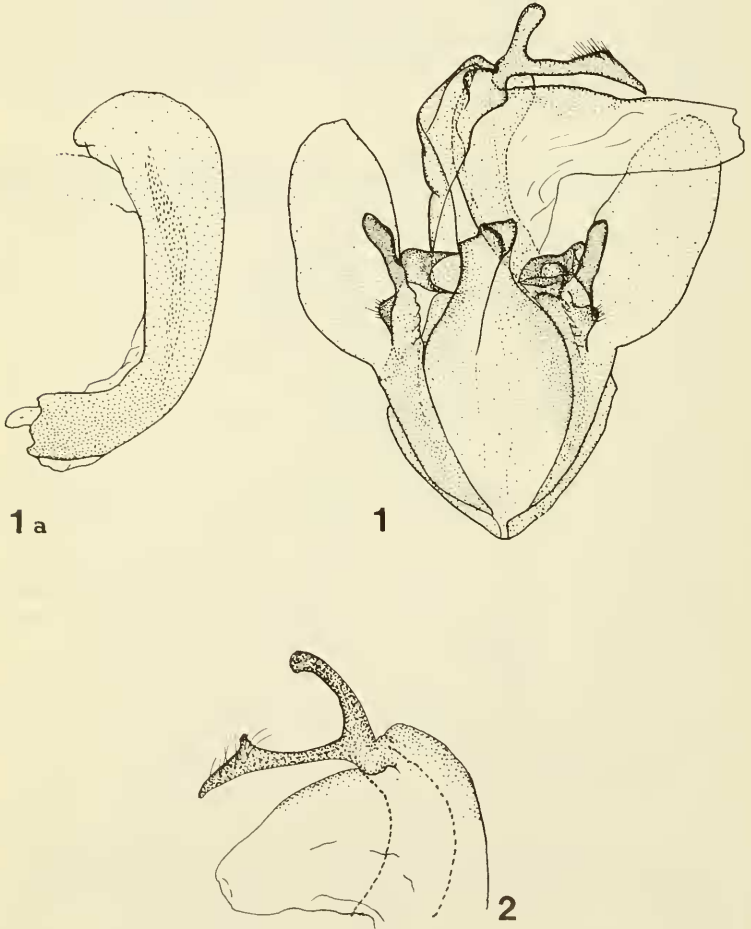
Clytie illunaris Hbn. was of course recorded as not uncommon in Malta by A. Valletta (1973) and need not be doubted to be a resident there, as it is in both Italy and Spain. But according to C. E. E. Rungs (1981:398) this south-west European moth is at the most coastal in Morocco and he suspects that earlier records of it from southerly parts of that country refer to *C. sancta*. He also mentions that the two species *Clytie haifae* Stgr., and *C. arenosa* Roths. occur there, and they too might be confused with *illunaris* if not checked genitally.

The same suspicion falls on records of *C. illunaris* from the Eastern Mediterranean, which require confirmation from the male genitalia. How far eastwards along the N. African coast it really spreads is doubtful, though Tunis at least seems likely.

The description of the one British larva and pupa, and the identity of its reported foodplant, are not the least reasons for puzzlement, as the principal, if not only, foodplant of all *Clytie* species is *Tamarix*. A desperate young larva, I suppose, unable to find the foliage of this, in Britain, usually coastal shrub, might be forced to feed on a herbaceous substitute, even horse-radish (as some low plants in France have also been mentioned); and that might account for its green colour, which is more usually in this genus, only the

*Wychwood, High Road, Cookham Berks., SL6 9JF.

colour of the younger larva, still spending the day-time high up on the green twigs of tamarisk; in later instars these larvae are brown and rest by day low down on the woody stems of the shrub, or, preferably, under loose bark on the tree-trunk, which I found the usual place selected for pupation by *C. sancta* on the sizeable tamarisk trees of the Lebanon coastal littoral. I never found these pupae "wrinkled" as described by the finders, but typically Catocaline, and glossy, except for a purplish bloom in some species.



Clytie illunaris: fig. 1, male genitalia; fig. 1a, aedeagus only.
C. sancta: fig. 2, male genitalia (uncus and anus only).

I have been unable to discuss these points with either of the two discoverers, Messrs. D. S. Brown and H. Duddington, their names not being in my society directories; that is one reason why I mention these discrepancies now. It would be interesting to hear from them. Incidentally their bred example, figured in J. Heath (1983: plate 12 fig. 7) is unusually pale and weakly marked; the more typical French example (*ibidem* fig. 6) was supplied to the editor from my collection.

The tamarisk may well grow in parts of the Humber and Trent estuary. It is planted on cliff walks in many parts of our southern coast, being a halophyte, and one finds odd examples of it in the interior of England. I would suggest those anxious to retake the moth in England might rather look for it in the south, where a fertile female, chancing to land on our shores, might find the normal foodplant. I myself beat tamarisks on June 28th 1980 near Ventnor, I.O.W., in the hope of finding this or some other Mediterranean moth, but in vain. Only one lepidopterous larva fell into my tray, a minute *Orgyia antiqua* (L.); this I bred up on flowers from a chance garden tamarisk growing in Cookham, Berks., until big enough to identify, when I transferred it to *Salix* leaves, and a male duly emerged on July 28th. Residents of our southern coasts where immigrants land might remember that *C. illunaris* and various exotic Geometrids might one day turn up on our coastal tamarisks.

As for the Trent, could the parent of the puzzling larva have been introduced with cargo, by ship or air-liner? The map suggests the former as possible, but those who know the area better than I do, might, if they know of tamarisks there, look thereon and ignore the horse-radishes, this summer.

The natural distribution of the genus *Clytie* was a theme in a paper I read at the SEL Congress of 1982 at Cambridge, whose appearance in print is awaited. The attached figure shewing the genitalic difference of male *C. illunaris* and *C. sancta* (mainly in uncus form) may be useful. I am indebted to Mr. S. Fletcher for figure 1 (and 1a).

References

- Heath, J., 1983, *Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain & Ireland*, Vol. X. Harley Books.
- Pinker, R., 1973. Interessante und neue Funde und Erkenntnisse für die Lepidopterenfauna der Kanaren-V. *Zeits. der Arb. Oesterr. Entomol.* 25(1/2):2-110 (1 Plate).
- Rungs, C. E., 1981. Catalogue raisonné des Lépidoptères du Maroc: inventaire et observations écologiques, T. 2. *Trav. Sc. Inst. Sc.s.Zool.* 40. Rabat.
- Valletta, A., 1973. *The moths of the Maltese Islands* (118pp., 16pl.).
 ————, 1984. Additions to the Known Lepidoptera (Heterocera) of the Maltese Islands. *Ent. Rec.* 96: 46.